

**The Owers, *Les Ours*, *Weembrug* and 'The Old City':  
Place-Names, History and Submarine Archaeology**

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Until recently, little attention has been paid to the names of features of particular interest to mariners around the coasts of the British Isles, perhaps because it was not generally realised that most of the earliest relevant evidence is only available from non-English sources. These include sailing directions, from the 15th and 16th centuries, and maps and charts from as early as the first quarter of the 14th century. Most of the latter are on a very small scale, which made the accurate placement of place-names difficult, even when, for the period, the coasts were reasonably accurately depicted. Usually cartographers had no personal knowledge of the coasts concerned, so had to obtain their information from a number of different, oral and/or written sources, which were sometimes contradictory. Not infrequently, the small scale meant that they had insufficient space to include all the names at their disposal, and they were compelled to make uninformed decisions as to which to include and which to omit. These sorts of problems, as well as sheer carelessness, are evident on many early maps, but perhaps most particularly so on Alonso de Santa Cruz's 1540s map of England (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Four recent studies of English and Welsh coastal names have shown that some features were known by more than one name.<sup>2</sup> Such naming variations occur also in the case of the shoals called The Owers, off Selsey Bill.

Selsey as the *-ey* of its name, from OE *ĕg* 'island', suggests, used to be an island.<sup>3</sup> The occasional *Selsea* spelling is misleading. Manhood Hundred (OE *māne wudu* 'common wood')<sup>4</sup> of which it forms part, is bounded on the south-west and the south-east by the sea. The remaining bounds are from Pagham Harbour, via Sidlesham and Birdham to the adjacent Chichester Channel, thence via that Channel to the sea west of West Wittering. Both Manhood and Selsey, as *manwod* and *selesey*, were shown as islands on the 'Gough' map, c.1360.<sup>5</sup> The natural bounds of Selsey today are from Pagham Harbour, via Sidlesham to the sea in Bracklesham Bay (Fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> The history of the area has been covered by Edward Heron-Allen,<sup>7</sup> W. E. P. Done,<sup>8</sup> and the relevant volumes of the *Victoria History of the County of Sussex*.<sup>9</sup>

The vast extent of the erosion of the south coast of England can be seen in J. A. Williamson's *The English Channel*.<sup>10</sup> There can be little doubt that the coast south of Selsey at one time extended at least as far as *Hooe Bank* (Fig. 2), and probably much further. Major Hume Wallace's studies of sea-



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level changes between Portsmouth and Pagham over the centuries have examined that area in great detail.<sup>11</sup> With the relative rise in sea level the higher parts of the land south of Selsey became islands, and eventually shoals, some of which still dry at low tide (Figs. 12 and 13).

The name *Manwid* (i.e. Manhood), appears against an island east of *Vuicht* (the Isle of Wight) on a map in Sebastian Munster's 1540 edition of Ptolemy's atlas.<sup>12</sup> On a map of the 1540s attributed to the Franco-Scottish cartographer, Jean Rotz, *manwode* and *selisey* [sic] are depicted as islands, though very inaccurately (Fig. 3).<sup>13</sup> Selsey (*Sealesea*) also apparently appears as an island alongside Manhood Hundred (*Manhode*) on one of Laurence Nowell's maps of the 1560s.<sup>14</sup> On Saxton's maps of Hampshire and of south-east England (1579), Selsey (*Chelsey/Insul* and *Chelsey* respectively) is depicted as almost an island.<sup>15</sup> John Norden's map of Sussex of 1595 shows Selsey as an island, but contradictorily names it *Celsey/Pen ins.* (Fig. 4).<sup>16</sup> On John Speed's map of Sussex (1610), Manhood appears as *The manhope*; Selsey, portrayed as a peninsula, is named *Selsey Peninsu.*, and the village of Selsey is marked in its original position, now called Church Norton, on Pagham Harbour.<sup>17</sup> On Speed's map of Hampshire, the original *mæne wudu* appeared as *The Manhode*, and Selsey is clearly depicted as an island named *Pen Island*.<sup>18</sup> This is an interesting case of carelessness, where the actual name Selsey was omitted, and the first syllable of the Latin *peninsula*, probably copied from Norden's *Pen ins.* inscription, was turned into a name and the remaining abbreviated 'word' was translated into English. It may further be observed in passing that on Speed's map of the Isle of Wight,<sup>19</sup> Hayling Island appears as *The Isle of Haybuge*, an example of manuscript *li* being transcribed as *b*, followed by the common *n/u* minim confusion. Just off the entrance to Chichester Harbour, there are two tiny islands or shoals named *Chichester* and *Powler*. Just east of them, the adjacent 'mainland' is named *The Byll*, clearly Selsey Bill, even though the headland itself is just off the map. It is a significantly earlier use of *Bill* for that headland than Mawer and Stenton's earliest dating of 1740.<sup>20</sup> They suggest that the name Selsey Bill may have been given in imitation of Portland Bill, even though it is not particularly 'beak-like'. It may not be now, but there have probably been significant changes in its shape over the years before its relatively recent stabilisation. Portland Bill figures much earlier than the 1649 noted by A. D. Mills,<sup>21</sup> for it appears as 'the byll at Portlonde' in anonymous mid-15th century *Sailing directions*,<sup>22</sup> and as 'the byll at Portlande' in Richard Proude's collection,<sup>23</sup> both of which were undoubtedly derived from a common, probably much earlier, source.

### §1. The Owers

These shoals constitute an extensive, very dangerous navigational hazard for ships bound for, or leaving, Portsmouth and Southampton, between the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight and Selsey Bill. It is therefore hardly

surprising that they should be recorded on early manuscript charts and in early sailing directions. However, the earliest known surviving mentions of them in such documents predate any obviously recognisable version of their present name by over two centuries (see §4).

The commonly accepted explanation for the name The Owers is that proposed by C. A. Seyler, and embraced by Mawer and Stenton.<sup>24</sup> It is suggested that the name represents the last traces of Old English *cymenes ōra* ('Cymen's beach, shore or landing place'), a place first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as the site of the landing of the South Saxons, led by Ælle and his three sons Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa, in 477 AD,<sup>25</sup> though this date and the site have been questioned. Mawer and Stenton identify The Owers as this site primarily on the basis of the Cædwalla, Æthelstan and Bryhthelm charters,<sup>26</sup> and especially on a passage in the first of these, supposedly of 3 August AD 683, which lists, or purports to list, clockwise, the seaward bounds of lands granted to St Wilfrid. In English it reads:

From the entrance of the harbour which is called in English Wynderynge [not Wittering, but the now lost Withering, or Widdering on Pagham Harbour (see Fig. 13)] round where the sea falls back at Cumeneshora, so toward the western shore at Rumbruge, along the shore as far as Chenestone, then along the shore to Heremuðe [the entrance to Chichester Harbour] then toward the northern shore along the river to Wialesflet [presumed to be the Bosham channel], and on as far as the point where Brimesdike comes out; then towards the east along that dyke to Woflet [Bremere Rife], then towards the east along the stream and so on to the southern shore at Wuderingemuðe [Pagham Harbour again].<sup>27</sup>

Mawer and Stenton state that 'Such a position would coincide with the lie of the Owers, and, allowing for the constant advance of the sea on the land, it is probable that the Owers lie where the coastline lay in the fifth century.'<sup>28</sup> Robert Morden, however, on his map of Sussex in the English translation of William Camden's *Britannia* (1695), places the inscription *Cimen shore*, an interesting example either of careless copying or popular etymology, against an anchor symbol just off West Wittering and *Cockham* (Cakeham).<sup>29</sup> This placement may well be due to the note appended to the text, which reads: *Near the haven of Chichester is W. Witering where, (so the monuments of the Church testifie) Aella the first founder of the kingdom of Suth-sex arrived.*<sup>30</sup>

Morden's map also gives the name *Ourmouth* (copied from Norden?) to the entrance to Chichester harbour just west of West Wittering. This *Our* element, however, the first element in the *Heremuðe* cited above in the Cædwalla document, is quite unconnected with either OE *ōra* 'border, margin, bank, shore', or with The Owers. *Ourmouth* and *Heremuðe* can be traced back to OE *horh* + *mūða* 'dirty estuary' as early as 683 AD.<sup>31</sup> The



'monuments of the Church' mentioned above are presumably the Cædwalla, Æthelstan and Byrthelm charters, though one cannot be certain. However, it is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that the arrival of the Saxons is mentioned, and not in those charters. If those charters are the 'monuments' referred to, then the Camden annotator's interpretation of the wording of the charters differs from that of Mawer and Stenton.

The Cædwalla Latin document passage translated above is, or purports to be, a translation of a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon document. Martin Welch provides some grounds for querying Mawer and Stenton's conclusion regarding the site of *cymenesora*. Commenting on that charter, he says:

In terms of its diplomatic, the detailed boundary clause here is unlikely to represent an original element from a genuine seventh-century document. This diploma survives in late cartulary copies, the earliest transcribed in the thirteenth century, while Dr P. Chaplais has argued that as it now stands, the entire document is a forgery. A *Cymeneres horan* appears in a very similar boundary clause belonging to a charter dated 957 [Bishop Byrthelm's deed], which claims to restore the same estate to the bishop of Selsey. This suggests that in both documents the boundary clauses were composed in the tenth century. They might conceivably refer to a genuine place-name in that district, or represent an imaginative misreading of a similar place-name from a seventh century document, but we might be seeing a forger at work who borrowed the name from the ASC [Anglo-Saxon Chronicle] to add a flavour of archaic authority'.<sup>32</sup>

Welch goes on to wonder why, if Ælle and his sons landed near Selsey, there is no mention in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of their having attacked Chichester, though it does mention their attack on *Andredeſceaster* (Pevensey) in AD 491. If the Chronicle account of the landfall is correct, it is reasonable to assume that Chichester is named after one of Ælle's sons, Cissa, thus Cissa + *ceaster*.<sup>33</sup> Since Lancing, between Chichester and Pevensey, is apparently named after another, Wlencing,<sup>34</sup> it is not unreasonable to suggest that the other son, Cymen, might have had a feature near where they landed named after him.

Elsewhere, Welch paraphrases his statement quoted above, commenting that 'Most scholars have agreed that as it stands the document is a forgery... the boundary clause is unacceptable for a seventh century charter. The addition of an historical place-name to a boundary clause is an obvious trick to make a document appear authentic.'<sup>35</sup> He goes on to give reasons based on the ASC references for suggesting that the Ouse-Cuckmere region is a more likely site for *Cymenesora*. Welch and Dr Chaplais are clearly dubious over the evidentiary value of the Cædwalla charter. Mawer and Stenton, on the other hand, and Major Hume Wallace, who knows the area intimately, and



has dived extensively there, believe the place-name evidence is genuine. I do not find Welch's arguments overly convincing. The suggested Owers landing site for Ælla's expedition is conveniently near Chichester, whose modern name, as we have seen, could well be derived from the name of one of his sons. The OE *ōra* element of *Cymenesora* is very common along the Hampshire and West Sussex coastline, but does not appear to exist in the Ouse-Cuckmere area.

Names derived from OE *ōra* 'border, margin, bank, shore', are admittedly often very difficult to distinguish from those derived from OE *ōfer* 'river-bank, border, margin', or from OE *ofer* 'a (flat-topped) hill' or 'ridge'.<sup>36</sup> In the case of coastal locations, one or other of the first two would seem logical.

Even though Mawer and Stenton's identification is probably right, I believe a number of points are worth making. Firstly, they did not provide a single dated version of The Owers to connect the modern Admiralty chart form with that of the hypothetical source, *cymenes ōra* and its variant spellings. Secondly, three prominent *ōra* names reasonably near The Owers, namely Bognor, Itchenor and Copnor, all have the *ōra* element preceded by a personal name, Buge, \*Icca and \*Coppa respectively.<sup>37</sup> If The Owers is derived from *Cymenesora*, how does one explain the disappearance of the personal name? Mere chance, or because a five-syllable place-name was rather long to pronounce?<sup>38</sup> Or because the location, once it became submerged, was for long seldom referred to, except orally, by fishermen and other (illiterate?) mariners? It should be admitted that there is one coastal *ōra* name, the Ower near Calshot, which appears today with no name prefix, but there is no evidence that it ever had one. On the other hand, two other *ōra* names, at the mouth of Beaulieu River, Stansore Point and Needs Ore Point, the latter sometimes having sometimes appeared as *Needs Oar* or *Nedes Orre Point*, still have what are probably names \*Stān and \*Hnydda?, prefixed to them.<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, The Owers off Selsey Bill seems to be the only case where a name apparently derived from *ōra* is invariably recorded with a final -s plural.<sup>40</sup> However, this could be because that form represents what we would now write as 'The Ower's (shoal)', or because what was originally a singular name became plural to indicate that there were a number of shoals in the area, now differentiated as Outer Owers, Middle Owers, Malt Owers, etc., all in the plural.

There is at least one offshore case of Ower, in the singular, which I have never seen mentioned or commented on, but it is a long way from Selsey. It is the name of a bank in the North Sea, east of another now known as Leman, between Winterton and Flamborough Head.<sup>41</sup> Both names appear in various forms; for example as *Limber* and *Urry* in the mid-15th century *Sailing directions*,<sup>42</sup> as *Limber* and *Ury* in Proud's sailing directions,<sup>43</sup> as *the Limmer and Ore* in *The Safegard of Sailors* (1584)<sup>44</sup>, and as *the Leman Ore, or Leman and Ore* in Nathaniel Cutler's *A General Coasting Pilot* (1728), where one also finds 'The Leman and Oar, or Ower are two very dangerous

sands . . . The Ower lieth 2 or 3 miles without the Leman.'<sup>45</sup>

The alternative spellings *Ore* and *Oar* are of some interest. The two Hampshire manors or hamlets called Ower cited by Richard Coates as from OE *ofer* or *ōra* are recorded as *Hore*, *Ore* and *Oure*,<sup>46</sup> while the point at the mouth of Beaulieu river, *Needs Oar* or *Needs Ore Point* corresponds exactly to the two North Sea Ower variant forms.

The earliest example I have found of The Owers, in that spelling, is in *The Safegard of Sailers, or Great Rutter* (1584), basically an English translation of some Dutch sailing directions, where *the Owers* is given as the English version of the Dutch name *Weembrug* (see §3).<sup>47</sup> They appear as *Owers* four years later on one of Robert Adams' manuscript charts of the Armada's progress up the Channel.<sup>48</sup>

Because of the apparent lack of any surviving really early mention of (*The*) *Ower(s)*, this very common *ow* spelling of them presents a problem (ou < ME *ō* = *ora*? or au < ME *ū*?). Was it then pronounced, should it now be pronounced, as in standard English *bower*, *cower*, *power* and *tower*, or as in *lower* (as opposed to *higher*), *mower*, *rower* and *sower*, or is neither pronunciation quite right? That part of The Owers once known as Sea Owers, now Outer Owers, appears on a chart of c.1702 by Edmund Halley as *Sea Ours*,<sup>49</sup> which suggests that the first of the above pronunciations was then used by at least some mariners. On the other hand during the 15th century our word *our* was often spelled *ower*.

*Ower* and *Over* are understandably quite often confused on charts. One by M. Bellin gives the plural form *Sea Overs* for *Sea Owers*, and he also gives *Owerfal* for Overfall, NE of Yarmouth.<sup>50</sup> Those examples, and similar ones found elsewhere, are almost certainly printing errors, but might just conceivably suggest the possibility that *Ower* could be a dialectal version of an abridgement of Overfall. The meaning of Overfall is not an inappropriate one: 'A turbulent surface of water with short breaking waves, caused by a strong current or tide setting over a submarine ridge or shoal.'<sup>51</sup> But there appears to be no evidence to suggest that such an abbreviated form ever existed. The earliest OED rendering of *overfall* is dated 1542.

As mentioned above, the earliest rendering of the name that I could find was in 1584. However, shoals are marked in the area on numerous Italian charts from early in the 14th century, though under an entirely different name, *ciuita* (see §4). The earliest appearance of that name would appear to be on a chart of 1313 by Pietro Vesconte.<sup>52</sup> They also bear that name in Italian 15th-century sailing directions,<sup>53</sup> but surprisingly, no shoals at all, named or unnamed, are indicated in the area in the 15th-century English sailing directions,<sup>54</sup> or in the 15th-century Low German ones.<sup>55</sup>

The *oar* and *ore* renderings of the North Sea Ower, and the *Needs Oar/Ore* spellings of what was almost certainly an Ower, suggest that neither of the above-mentioned pronunciations (the *tower* [au] and *mower* [ou] versions) was the original one. Modern local pronunciation of a given name

is frequently, though by no means always, indicative of the original pronunciation. Major Hume Wallace has confirmed that the local pronunciation is that noted by Mawer and Stenton, (oær[z]).<sup>56</sup> This pronunciation would seem to confirm that implied by the *oar/ore* spellings. The apparently unique spelling *Ouars*, on a chart of 1604 by Thomas Hood, probably does so also.<sup>57</sup> Cases of obvious carelessness on the part of printers, such as the inscription *The Owners* [sic] *L<sup>i</sup>. V / White and Red.fl.ev. 30 sec* on a chart made for the Board of Trade Examiners in 1912–13,<sup>58</sup> of course have nothing to contribute to the debate.

## §2. *Les Ours*

John Norden's map of Sussex (c.1595) does not show The Owers shoals in their correct location. However, a short distance north-east of Selsey he has the inscription *Bognor Rocks / of the frenche les Ours* (Fig. 4).<sup>59</sup> It seems certain that Norden mistakenly associated *les Ours* (lit. 'the bears') with Bognor Rocks, and that the name really refers to The Owers. The first occurrence of *Les Ours* that I am aware of is on Oronce Fine's map *Nova Totius Galliae Descriptio* (1546) (Fig. 5).<sup>60</sup> That is almost certainly the source of the same inscription on very similar maps of France in Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570)<sup>61</sup> and in Gerard de Jode's *Speculum Orbis Terrarum* (1578).<sup>62</sup> Pierre Hamon's map of France (1560)<sup>63</sup> depicts *Les Ours* as twelve shoals or islands.

In view of the fact that the name of such a prominent south coast landmark as Beachy Head is derived from the French *be(a)u chef* ('beautiful headland'),<sup>64</sup> having replaced whatever the Old English name for it was, it might seem possible that The Owers could be an adaptation of *Les Ours*. However, it is not easy to conceive of any very convincing reason why the French should have given these shoals such a name. However, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese navigators referred to Eddystone Rock by some spelling of the name *Benedict*, for example, *benedita* (Fig. 1), and *benedicte* (Fig. 5), presumably after a ship of that name wrecked there. Could a ship named after one or other of the two obscure fifth-century French saints by the name of *Ours* have been wrecked on The Owers?<sup>65</sup> Contre-Amiral François Bellec, Director of the Musée de la Marine in Paris, kindly informed me that there was a ship called *Ours* (not *Les Ours*, so presumably in the singular) which took part in the defence of Bordeaux and La Rochelle in 1581. However, that is significantly after the appearance of *Les Ours* on Oronce Fine's map, though there might possibly have been an earlier ship of the same name.

In the course of endeavouring to see whether any reasonable case could be made out for deriving The Owers from *Les Ours*, an interesting, far-fetched, almost undoubtedly coincidental, possible association was observed between *Les Ours* and Selsey. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth mentioning. The latter name is generally accepted as being derived from OE *seolh* 'seal'



and *ēg* 'island'.<sup>66</sup> The Venerable Bede is well known to have paraphrased in Latin the meaning of one spelling of the name as *insula vituli marini* ('island of the marine calf', i.e. 'seal'). Mawer and Stenton suggest that, as Bede's *vituli marini* was in the genitive singular, Selsey probably got its name because of 'the stranding of a seal there on some memorable occasion, rather than by their common presence there'.<sup>67</sup> This unique example, however, might seem somewhat slender evidence on which to differentiate between 'seal's island' and 'seals' island'. In French one variety of seal is known as the *veau marin* (lit. 'sea calf'; cf. Latin *phoca vitulina* 'seal calf'), evidently the same as Bede's *vituli marini*. There is no way of knowing how well early mariners were able to distinguish between different varieties of seal, or which varieties frequented the south coast of England before the Norman Conquest or much later. However, another variety of seal, which would have been known to French and Breton fishermen working the Grand Banks off the coast of Newfoundland in the 16th century is the *ours marin* ('sea bear'). Could seals of any sort possibly have been seen by French mariners in the vicinity of The Owers? The absence of the word *marins* from *Les Ours* would not necessarily present an insuperable objection. In Spanish, *lobo marino* (lit. 'sea wolf') means 'seal', yet the several small islands and headlands named *Lobo(s)*, in the Canaries and on and off the coasts of the Americas all indicate the presence of seals, not wolves.

All the above hypotheses, however, seem highly dubious. A far simpler explanation of the connection between *Les Ours* and The Owers is available. Someone completely ignorant of French might conceivably think, from its spelling, that the French word *ours* would be pronounced like the English words *ours*, and *hours* (often spelled *howers* in the past). Actually, of course, there is relatively little sound similarity between the French word and the above two English words. On the other hand, only in the pronunciation of the sibilant does the French word *ours* differ from the Selsey fishermen's pronunciation of Owers mentioned in §1. It therefore seems certain that *Les Ours* is derived from the local, West Sussex pronunciation of The Owers, and not vice versa.

There is one further reason for rejecting a French *Les ours* derivation of The Owers. Italian mariners knew The Owers from at least as early as 1313 by some spelling of the name 'the (old) city' (see §4), and Portuguese and Spanish mariners also adopted the name. The French used it too, certainly in the early 16th century, and possibly later. A French 1577 translation of some very outdated Italian sailing directions of 1490 does not render *ciuita*, either by *la cité vieille* ('the old city') or by *Les ours*, but leaves it untranslated. This may merely indicate the translator's ignorance.<sup>68</sup> The documented appearance of *Les Ours* in 1546 on Oronce Fine's map would appear to mark the beginning of the abandonment by the French of the '(old) city' name and its replacement by a Gallicised version of The Owers, before the eventual adoption of the English spelling itself.

### §3. *Weembrug* etc.

The Dutch name for The Owers appears in a great variety of spellings, including *Wegenbrugge*, *Wedenbruges* and *Wegebrugge* in Jan Seuerszoon's sailing directions of 1532,<sup>69</sup> the earliest mentions I have seen. In the anonymous manuscript Flemish sailing directions of 1572–80, published in 1936 as *Le livre de mer*, it appears as *Weembrug*, though the notes in the published edition incorrectly identify the name as indicating Horse and Dean Sand which is several miles further west.<sup>70</sup> Other renderings of the Dutch name include *Weenbrugge* and *Weenbrug*, the latter twice, once correctly located, and once on shore, on a chart in the first printed sea atlas, L. J. Waghenauer's *De Spieghel der Zeevaerdt* (1584–85) (Fig. 6).<sup>71</sup> In his *Thresoor der Zeevaerdt* (1592) it appears as *Weerenbrugh* in the text, and as *Wenbruck*, off *Chelseÿ* on a chart (Fig. 7).<sup>72</sup>

In Waghenauer's *De Spieghel der Zeevaerdt*, in a listing of English and Dutch place-name equivalents for features along the English coast, *Allingborn* (Aldingbourne) is given as the English name for *Weenbrug*, not The Owers (Fig. 8).<sup>73</sup> *Allingborn* is also the name given for The Owers shoal on a chart included in Ortelius's posthumous 1601 (Antwerp) edition of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*.<sup>74</sup> Willem Jansz Blaeu identifies the shoal as *Weembrug Belgis* (i.e. known to the Flemish as *Weembrug*).<sup>75</sup>

One wonders whether Waghenauer was somehow mistaken about the English using *Allingborn* to identify The Owers. In the 16th century, Aldingbourne, a few miles east of Chichester, was a small village. The name of a landmark on shore was often applied to the shoal which it helped to identify, as we shall see in the case of *Weembrug*. However, Major Hume Wallace informs me that because of its position, Aldingbourne's church tower could almost certainly not have been used as a seamark for identifying the position of The Owers. He suggests that the reference is to an 11th-century tower which was incorporated in the Bishop of Chichester's palace at Aldingbourne, on the crest of a ridge some 1000 metres south of the parish church. It was used to give warning of the vicinity of Bognor Rocks, and perhaps The Owers, and watch for hostile ships approaching the then still existing Aldingbourne Rife estuary. The palace complex was destroyed in the Civil War.

There is a 1521 reference to a *clochier* ('tower' or 'spire') being used to locate The Owers, but there is no way of knowing which *clochier* it was (see §4).<sup>76</sup> It could well have been Chichester cathedral's spire, built between 1391 and 1402. It has been used as a seamark for centuries, and is still so used. Note its prominence on N. Lambert's chart of 1594 (Fig. 9).<sup>77</sup> It could have been the above-mentioned Aldingbourne palace tower. However, as we shall see in §4, there are other possibilities.

Where did the Dutch name for The Owers come from? Slightly later spellings of the name give a clearer hint of its origin. Blaeu, in his *Light of Navigation* (1612), gives *Weembrugh* and *Wembridge*.<sup>78</sup> The name is

undoubtedly an adaptation of some spelling or pronunciation of Bembridge (Point), the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight, now known as Foreland. The first element, *We(e)m* is a Dutch phonetic approximation to the first syllable of Bembridge, the second, *brugge* etc., being a translation of 'bridge'. The earliest recorded English form of Bembridge (1316) was *bynnebrygg*, from Old English **binnan** and **brycg** 'within the bridge'.<sup>79</sup> A much later Dutch rendering of the name appears in the van Keulen sea atlas, where we find *Owers of* ['or'] *Weainburgh* and *De Owers of Weenburg zand*, where in both cases the 'bridge' element, by metathesis, became a 'burgh' or 'town' element.<sup>80</sup>

Greenville Collins, in his *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot* (1693), uses 'Benbridge Point' and 'Chichester Spire' as marks for locating The Owers,<sup>81</sup> and Nathaniel Cutler's *A General Coasting Pilot* (1728) also does so, in somewhat greater detail: 'the Owers is a very dangerous Sand . . . it lies S.E. from Chichester Spire, 4Ls from the Shore and 4 to 5 Ls from Benbridge Point on the Isle of Wight, the Island bearing due west . . . The thwart Mark for the Owers is Chichester Steeple, which is a high Spire.'<sup>82</sup>

The van Keulen sea atlas contains a paragraph referring to The Owers derived from an English author. It reads: 'Weenburg legt zuid-zuid oost van de Toorn van Chichesters, en een myl van de val of 4 mylen groot-oost van Bembridge-point, op't Eylant Wigt' ('The Owers lie SSE of Chichester tower, and one mile from the shore, or 4 miles due east of Bembridge Point in the Isle of Wight').<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere on the same page the spellings *Benbridge punt* and *Kembridge point* appear, *K* and *B* being reasonably common miscopyings or misprints. There is another reference on the same page to seamarks used to locate The Owers: 't Dwars merk van Weenburg is Chichisters ronde toorn N.N.W. van u / als gyaan de buyte-leant zeyt 't haven merk is 't Swane-clif op Wigt' (lit. 'the thwart mark of The Owers is Chichester's round tower NNW of you / if you are on the outer ['far?'] side, the harbour [error for 'thwart?'] mark is the Swan cliff on Wight'). To identify the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight, St Helen's, Culver Cliff and Swan Cliff were sometimes cited instead of Bembridge Point, in the latter two cases presumably because their chalk cliffs make them visible from a greater distance.

Hume Wallace suggested to me that the duplicate naming of *Weembrug* on the above-mentioned chart in Waghenaer's *Spiegel* (Fig. 6) could be a corrupt duplicate version of the lost, long-submerged *Rumbruge* cited in the Cædwalla document, since there is still a Rumbridge Farm, a modern form of *Rumbrug(e)*, still existing on Selsey itself. The suggestion seems to me invalid, since the name Rumbridge Farm is probably derived from the name of a descendant of a family which lived at *Rumbruge* before it was swallowed up by the sea. The duplication of *Weembrug* is probably merely the result of carelessness in the manuscript map, or the printer's careless copying from the manuscript itself. The appearance of a single inscription between two



features, especially two islands, always left an uninformed copyist in a quandary regarding which it applied to. Some copyists hedged their bets and duplicated the inscription. On a chart in Waghenae's *Mariners Mirror* (1588), a translation of his *De Spieghel der Zeevaerdt*, The Owers shoal is marked, but no name is given in either position.<sup>84</sup> Such errors were by no means uncommon. There is no duplication of *Weenbrug* on any other Dutch or Flemish chart, whereas an obviously careless duplication of Winchester occurs on another of Waghenae's charts in his *Thresoor der Zeevaerdt* (1592) (Fig. 7).<sup>85</sup> It is highly improbable that, as a maritime cartographer, he would have been aware of the site of Old Winchester (Hill), as well as of Winchester itself, yet it appears twice. There are other interesting examples of carelessness on the same chart. The word *chester* has been detached from the end of *Portchester* and attached as [c]hester to the end of *Faram* (Fareham), thus giving *Port* and *Faramhester*. *Hauant* is misplaced, and though Portsmouth is marked, its name is missing.

§4. *cidade velha* etc. ('the old city').

We have apparently fixed dates in the first half of the 16th century for the first recorded appearances of the Dutch (*Weenbrug*) and French (*Les Ours*) names for The Owers, while that name itself, in that spelling, is recorded at least as early as 1584. Recognisable examples of those three names earlier than those cited must surely have existed, but I have been unable to find any renderings of any of them in any 15th-century sources. In fact, as mentioned above, the two surviving mid-15th-century English sailing directions, and the Low German ones of similar date or earlier, surprisingly fail to mention the existence of any shoals in the vicinity of The Owers, though they most certainly existed.

We have seen that the Genoese cartographer, Pietro Vesconte, on a chart of 1313, used the name *ciuita* ('city'). On another chart of his, of 1318 (Fig. 10),<sup>86</sup> he placed the inscription *ciuita* inland from the coast, just east of *portamua* (Portsmouth). Earlier examples may have existed, but certainly from then on most 14th- and 15th-century maps and charts of southern European origin showing the south coast of England bore some rendering of that name. A number of 16th-century ones did also. In many cases the name was expanded, in Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese, to read, in English, '(the) old city'. Some, though not all, also had offshore, in the vicinity, a series of crosses, the traditional way of indicating shoals. The name even appeared, also as *ciuita*, on one 14th-century world map, the famous 1375 one generally known as the Catalan Atlas, made by the Majorcan Jewish cartographer, Abraham Cresques.<sup>87</sup> It also figured in surviving early sailing directions written in those same four languages.

Konrad Kretschmer, in his edition of early Italian sailing directions, identifies the name as referring to Chichester.<sup>88</sup> He may possibly have got this idea from Delmar Morgan's glossary to the Hakluyt Society's edition of the

*Sailing directions for the circumnavigation of England.* These latter do not include any reference whatsoever to 'the old city', but include a statement regarding tides between *Seint Elenes* (St Helen's, in the Isle of Wight) and *Chakkeshorde*.<sup>89</sup> Delmar Morgan tentatively, but incorrectly, identified the latter as being Chichester; it is actually Calshot.<sup>90</sup> D. W. Waters, in the glossary to the sailing directions he edited, amalgamated the ideas of Delmar Morgan and Kretschmer, stating that both *chakkeshorde*, and *chaikesord*, a variant version of it, as well as the various versions of 'the old city', all referred to Chichester.<sup>91</sup>

It was the traditional practice of early cartographers to write the names of coastal features on the land, as far as possible, presumably in order to avoid obscuring coastal outlines and nearby islands, rocks and shoals. So it is perhaps understandable, from the positioning of the 'city' inscriptions between Portsmouth and Shoreham on charts, that several scholars have presumed that they referred to Chichester, as it is the most obvious 'old city' roughly in that location, yet no version of its modern name appears on them. However, those scholars might have wondered why southern European cartographers should have used that term to refer to Chichester, rather than some version of the name itself which, as we have seen, was probably derived from Cissa and **ceaster**, and had been in use since at least as early as 895 AD.<sup>92</sup> What is more, the entrance to Chichester harbour was, and is, so hard for sailing vessels of any size to negotiate, due to silting up, that it was hardly a port worth including on a chart. It did not start to figure on Portuguese charts until about the middle of the 16th century.<sup>93</sup> It is more difficult to understand why both Kretschmer and Waters failed to correctly identify the nature of 'the old city' from some of the very specific references in the Italian and French sailing directions.

The late Dr Helen Wallis suggested that Jean Rotz's *cidade* and *cidade velha* inscriptions in his manuscript atlas of 1542 which he presented to Henry VIII, were references not to Chichester, but to 'Old Selsey'.<sup>94</sup> Since she did not elaborate on this, it is not quite certain precisely what actual location she had in mind, since, as we shall see, the site of the original, Saxon cathedral on Selsey has long been the subject of some differences of opinion. Jean Rotz, though of Franco-Scottish parentage, in his atlas gives evidence of the use of Portuguese sources in his depiction of England, not merely by his use of *cidade* and *cidade velha* for '(old) city', but also by using *agulhas* ('needles') for The Needles, and *terra vermelha* (lit. 'reddish land') for The Naze.<sup>95</sup>

Other renderings of 'old city' and 'city', in Portuguese sailing directions, include *çibeta velha* and *çidade*.<sup>96</sup> Neither they, nor the following Italian ones, *la zitta vecchia*, *la Zita vecchia*, *cipta vecchia* and *ziuita*,<sup>97</sup> are of any assistance in identifying the 'city' referred to. Two other versions however, *le seche de ciuita* ('the shoals of city') and *la secha de ciuita* ('the shoal of city'),<sup>98</sup> specifically state the nature of the feature. Another clearly implies

what it is, for it warns mariners in the vicinity of *sancta lena* (St Helen's [point?], by which Bembridge Point or Foreland was sometimes known): 'quarti dalla citta chetti rimane da leuante' ('beware of the city which lies to the east').<sup>99</sup> In some mid-16th-century Italian sailing directions the reference is not to *seche* or *secha*, but to *rais* ('race'), a near synonym for 'overfall'.<sup>100</sup>

Versions of the Italian ('old') city' name were not restricted to manuscript charts and sailing directions, but were carried onto some early printed maps. *CIVITA* figures east of *PORTA/MVA* (Portsmouth) on a 'modern' map of France by Francesco Berlinghieri (1478).<sup>101</sup> The inscription *ciuitat* appears east of *portamua* on Martin Waldseemüller's 'new' map of the British Isles included in the 1513 Strassburg edition of Ptolemy's atlas.<sup>102</sup>

Early 16th-century French sailing directions contain specific references to 'the (old) city' as a navigational hazard. For example, we have: 'Entre les deux y a ung mauvais rochier qui s'appelle la Vieille Cité' (lit. 'Between the two [*Blanchet* (Beachy Head) and *l'isle d'Uich* (the Isle of Wight)] there is a bad rock which is called the Old City').<sup>103</sup> Elsewhere we have: 'y ha six lieues de l'isle [du Buich (sic)] a la roche, qui se nomme la Cite-ueille, qui est bien trois lieues en la mer' ('there are six leagues from the island [the Isle of Wight] to the rock called the Old City, which is a good three leagues out to sea').<sup>104</sup> Another reference includes a further detail: 'Amôt de l'isle douhic bien iii. lieux ya ung banc de rochier[s] qui a bien deux lieux de loing de terre a la mer, et est le trauers dun clochier et lon lappelle le banc de la v[i]eille cite' (lit. 'Level with', or 'In the same latitude as the Isle of Wight a good three leagues there is a bank of rock which is a good two leagues seawards from the land, and it is opposite a tower [or 'spire'] and it is called the old city').<sup>105</sup> It is impossible to tell which *clochier* is meant. Is it Chichester cathedral spire, the bishop's palace tower at Aldingbourne, the detached tower at Church Norton mentioned above and referred to below, or another? This 1521 reference is the first mention I have come across of a tower or spire being used to locate The Owers.

The French cosmographer, André Thevet, in copying this passage in 1586, probably from a later edition, carelessly altered the word *clochier*, writing *seche* ('shoal') instead, and then added 'On a accoustumé de l'appeller entre autres les Mathelos le banc de la vieille cité . . . ces bancs sont si dangereux que les plus routiers mariniers quoy qu'ils ayent vn clochier quj s'apparoist de loin en plaine mer pour guydon, ont beaucoup affaire a tenir la droite route sans s'engouffrer dans ces escueils'.<sup>106</sup> Despite the somewhat strange syntax of the first part of this sentence, it must mean: 'mariners are in the habit of calling it, amongst other things, the bank of the old city . . . these banks are so dangerous that most experienced mariners, even though they have a tower [or 'spire'] as a seamark, visible from far out to sea, find it very difficult to keep to the right channel and avoid being swallowed up by these shoals'. This would clearly imply that mariners knew these shoals by other names as well, almost certainly *Les Ours*, and perhaps an English and/or a Dutch name



as well (i.e. *Allingborn* [?], The Owers, *Weenbrug*).

Robert Copland, in his *The Rutter of the See* (1557?), a translation of the anonymous *Le routier de la mer* (1502–10), completely failed to identify correctly a reference to *la coste de la cite de v[i]eilles*, itself a misrendering ('the coast of the city of old women'),<sup>107</sup> for he translated it as 'the cost of y<sup>e</sup> swyngles',<sup>108</sup> in other words, The Shingles, a shoal close to The Needles, at the western end of the Isle of Wight. He also badly mistranslated another passage reading 'Et de la va en lest po<sup>te</sup> garder de la cite de v[i]eille' (lit. 'and from there [the Isle of Wight] go east to keep clear of the city of old' [?]).<sup>109</sup> His version, completely ignoring the words 'po<sup>te</sup> garder', reads 'And from thence go eastward from the swyngles'.<sup>110</sup> It looks as though neither Copland, nor the 'conninge men' he says he relied on for assistance with passages he found difficult,<sup>111</sup> recognised the *cite de v(i)eille(s)* etc. ('old city') references. This could be taken as meaning that English mariners, at the beginning of the 16th century, were not familiar with the 'old city' name, but used some other one, presumably some rendering of The Owers, or possibly *Allingborn*. On the other hand, it could merely mean that Copland did not consult any 'conninge men' over this particular name, or that those he did rely on did not know the name. They evidently incorrectly advised him over the identity of *goulff* ('Gulf', i.e. Wolf Rock off Land's End),<sup>112</sup> for he translated it as *Reynolde stone*, the Runnel Stone, another rock much nearer the Cornish coast.<sup>113</sup>

From the above evidence, it seems impossible to determine whether the 'old city' name was, or was not, ever used by English mariners. There being no doubt whatsoever regarding the use of the '(old) city' name by southern European mariners to refer to The Owers, one is still left with the problem as to why it got that name. For reasons of dating mentioned above, it is illogical to suggest that the 'old city' name really meant 'the Chichester shoal', even though mariners may have used Chichester cathedral's towers as a thwart mark, and certainly later used its spire, for the same purpose. If we discount Chichester as the origin of the name, what alternative is there?

There still exists a very old local tradition concerning the fate of the original Saxon cathedral on Selsey. It is maintained that it was on a site which was later submerged by the sea. It is even said 'that the cathedral bells may still be heard beneath the waters on stormy nights'.<sup>114</sup> Some locals maintain that the name Kirk Arrow attached to the spit projecting from Selsey Bill towards the shoal called The Mixon supports this tradition, but this is a clear case of popular etymology (see under Kirk Arrow in §5).

The famous antiquarian, William Camden, writing in Latin in his *Britannia* (1586), certainly seems to support the traditional site. In English he states:

Afterwards King Cedwalla, who conquer'd Edilwach, founded here [on Selsey] a Monastery, and honour'd it with an Episcopal See, which by

Stigand, the 22nd. Bishop, was translated to Chichester, where it now flourishes, and owns Cedwalla for its founder. In this Isle there are some obscure remains of that *little ancient city* [my italics], in which those bishops resided, cover'd at high water, but plainly visible at low water'.<sup>115</sup>

However, it may well be that he was just reporting local tradition. A more recent author comments: 'That the ancient cathedral of Selsey lies under the sea is a tradition that may well be true, though Camden's assertion that its ruins could be seen at low tide is romantic fiction.'<sup>116</sup> This statement he bases on an estimate of how much of the coast he thought had been eroded in the previous two hundred years and then extrapolating that amount backwards as far as the time of Domesday Book (1086–7), concluding that the coast can only have receded about half a mile. This estimate, of course, takes no account of such sudden, natural disasters as the one which, in 1210, caused the collapse of two of Chichester cathedral's original towers,<sup>117</sup> nor the large-scale one that in 1287 swamped the original Winchelsea.<sup>118</sup> And, of course, Hume Wallace's research into coastal changes in the area had not yet been published.

There is no doubt that the deer park of the bishops of Selsey lies under the sea, and the memory of it has still survived in the name The Park, an offshore anchorage area to the east of Selsey. The original diocese of Selsey, founded by St Wilfrid in 681, was moved to Chichester as part of the Norman policy of siting all cathedrals in major towns (Council of London, 1075),<sup>119</sup> rather than in small towns or villages, as several of the Saxon ones had been. The discovery of Anglo-Saxon, as well as Iron Age and Roman remains on the site of the old Selsey parish church at Church Norton suggests that St Wilfrid's 'cathedral' and monastery were there, and were not submerged.<sup>120</sup> No visible remains of them survive, as they were almost certainly wooden structures, so it was doubtless the absence of any trace of them that was responsible for the growth of the submersion tradition; after all, the sea has been encroaching on the land in the vicinity for many centuries.

Because of population shift from Church Norton to the present village of Selsey, the church on the Church Norton site was partially demolished in the mid-1860s and most of its fabric was used to build the present Selsey parish church. Only the chancel of the old parish church remains, as St Wilfrid's Chapel (Fig. 11). The earliest parts of the old church date from the 12th century.<sup>121</sup> It was almost certainly built on the site of St Wilfrid's 'cathedral'.

The long-standing tradition that the old Saxon 'cathedral' was submerged was decisively challenged by the discovery of the will of one bishop of Chichester, William Reed, dated 1st August 1382. It contained a request that his body 'be buried in front of the high altar in the chancel of [the church of] the Holy Trinity at Selsey formerly the cathedral church of my diocese'.<sup>122</sup> This would clearly appear to confirm that the original Saxon 'cathedral' on

Selsey was on the Church Norton site, even though, as the parish church of the original Selsey, it was completely rebuilt in the 12th century.<sup>123</sup> The bishop can hardly have failed to know where the original cathedral of his own diocese was, especially if he wished to be buried in it.

One may wonder why Norden, on his map of 1595, recorded the site of *Old Winchelsea drowned* (it had finally disappeared in 1287),<sup>124</sup> but did not record the site of Camden's drowned 'little ancient city' (Fig. 4). It certainly suggests that Camden's 'city', presumably Vesconte's *ciuita*, had been overwhelmed and abandoned significantly earlier, perhaps as a result of the 'great tide of the sea [which in 1014] flooded widely over this country, coming up higher than it had ever done before, and submerging many villages and a countless number of people'.<sup>125</sup> The fact that neither the 'old city', nor *Rumbruge* nor *Chenestone* nor *Widdering* (*Wynderynge*) figure in Domesday Book certainly suggest their disappearance well before 1086; the very name of the 'old city' seems to have been lost, unless it was *Cymenesora*.

Owing to the absence of any identifiable remains of St Wilfrid's cathedral at Church Norton, Camden evidently believed that they lay amongst those of his 'little ancient city'. As we now know that the cathedral must have been at Church Norton, what was it that gave rise to his statement that the remains of a 'city' were visible at low tide in his day (1586)? He is unlikely to have invented that story. If, as seems certain, his 'little ancient city' is the same '(old) city' which southern European mariners, from at least as early as 1313, used as their landmark to identify The Owers, what was it and where was it?

Professor Richard Coates of Sussex University kindly told me that to carry my research into The Owers further I should contact Major Hume Wallace, one of the foundation members of the British Sub-Aqua Club. His lengthy documentary and submarine investigations into the history of coastline changes between Portsmouth and Pagham would seem to have complemented mine, and we have each managed to provide the other with relevant information.

The only prominent feature just off Selsey Bill (about 1½ miles) that is still visible at low tide is the shoal now known as The Mixon (see §5), part of which always dries at low tide. The potentially most significant results of extensive diving in the vicinity of The Owers, and especially The Mixon have been written up in four works.<sup>126</sup> Hume Wallace's findings are kindly summarised by him below. Reference should also be made to Figs 12 and 13 and their captions.

The continuous bank of tumbled stone slabs on which the Mixon beacon stands extends some 300m around the East and SE sides of the shoal and is believed to be the collapsed remains of a massive wall which stood there, possibly with a platform paved with 6" thick Mixon stone slabs immediately behind the wall at the eastern end, to serve as



a ballista platform, similar to the arrangement at Pevensey. Many stone balls resembling ballista balls found at Pevensey were found on the seabed outside the walls.

The wall around the platform was built of a mixture of slabs of 2", 3" and 6" thickness. The slabs from the 2" and 6" beds are as they came from the quarry. The 3" slabs are 6" ones split in two.

Today these slabs lie directly on a surface of Mixon rock which appears very similar to themselves, but is softer and porous, and useless as a building stone because it will not withstand frost. The building slabs, in the other hand, will withstand centuries of weathering, as a walk around Selsey will confirm.

These 6" and 2" beds of hard *Alveolina* limestone are exposed as a continuous outcrop right round the shoal from the south, where they are 5ft below Chart Datum south of the beacon, but rising to the north, so due north they are 4ft down. 300 yds further to the NE we came to a place where the hard beds looked as though they had been deliberately dug back in a series of embayments. Here the outcrop is only about 1ft below today's lowest tides, but is now usually buried under a mixture of broken stone slabs and the rotting kelp plants which dragged them there. It is the stink from this which probably gives us the name Mixon or midden. We were lucky in 1966 to see the place on one of the rare occasions when it was not covered.

As we believe that on the Sussex Coastal Plain sea-level in Roman times was about 18ft lower, this quarry site was then only submerged 1ft at the occasional highest tide, and for the rest of the tidal cycle the overburden of soft upper Mixon rock could be removed and the hard 2" and 6" slabs loaded onto boats which could be floated away when the tide rose, for use elsewhere, as in Fishbourne Roman Palace, or a building by the Forum in Chichester. Or it could have been loaded onto carts or sledges for use on the Mixon itself, including the massive wall on the top of the hillock.

This wall, and a ditch on the north side of it, extended for about 1300m to the west and enclosed an area 250m north to south. The wall remains around the northern side, whether collapsed or still standing, were used as a source of building stone as far north as Chichester and Aldingbourne from the XIth century onwards, so only a few pieces survive in situ along the northern circumference. But at the southern and eastern ends the collapsed walls were probably buried under barrier beach, which protected them until the Mixon Beacon was erected and they came under the protection of the Admiralty which forbade the removal of further stone.

The fact that the place had the name of 'Old City' in 1313 would suggest that enough of the wall was still upstanding then for it to be recognised as such.

Whether it was in a sufficiently good state to have served as one of the *litus Saxonicum* (Saxon Shore) forts is unknown, but it is certainly not among those listed in the *Notitia dignitatum* of c.408.<sup>127</sup>

It will be remembered that some French sailing directions refer to a *clochier* as being a good landmark for identifying the *Cité vieille* shoal(s). It is of some significance to investigate which tower or spire was the one referred to. The most obvious one is that of Chichester cathedral, or there is the Bishop's palace one near Aldingbourne, if Waghenae's information was correct. But there is at least one other possibility.

Mark Taylor, Archaeological Officer with the West Sussex County Council, kindly informed me, in a private communication, that the foundations of a tower close to St Wilfrid's Chapel:

are clearly the keep or *donjon* of the post-Conquest earthwork castle at Church Norton. This tower may have been heightened and used as a bell-tower to serve St Wilfrid's Chapel. It is certainly close enough for this purpose and would explain the detached tower shown on the Lambert Barnardi painting [1519] in Chichester Cathedral. It is also probable that the tower within the earthwork castle was the 'olde stone Steeple' referred to in the letters patent [quoted below] which was used as a landmark by shipping to steer away from the shoals'.

The text of these letters patent, dated 12 August 1580, reads in part as follows:

there is in the saide Isle of Selsey, one olde stone steeple of a great height adioyning neere to the Sea, which of auncient time out of mind and at present is a notable Sea-marke for all Merchants and Trauailers by Sea vpon the South coast, from East to West, and from West to East, wherby not onlie the said Maisters of Merchant ships but also the Maisters of our Ships take principall marke for the auoiding the dangers of great Rocks and Shalles lying out tenne miles from the shoare, being one of the most dangerous places upon that Coast called the Shalles.<sup>128</sup>

It should perhaps be pointed out that the word 'steeple', now commonly used of a tower with a spire, earlier was merely a synonym for tower. So important was this tower considered, that collections for its restoration were authorised in 1580, in London, Surrey, Kent, Sussex and as far as Southampton and the Isle of Wight.<sup>129</sup> Hume Wallace, in a private communication to me dated 1 September 1994, queried the idea that the 'olde stone steeple of great height adioyning neere to the Sea' could be the earthwork castle tower at Church Norton referred to by Mark Taylor, since strictly speaking, it is hardly 'adioyning neere to the Sea'. However, such a

structure on The Mixon, a mile and a half off Selsey Bill, then probably still above water and attached to the land, would have served the purpose now served by the iron basket marker. It is impossible to determine with any certainty whether the 'olde stone steeple' referred to is the one at Church Norton, or the one which Hume Wallace suggests may have been on The Mixon. Whichever it was, it was clearly stated still to be in use as a sea mark in 1580, so it may or may not be the same one as 'the Stepull' mentioned both in 1541 and in 1579, on the latter occasion being stated to be 'in great decay'.<sup>130</sup>

The map of the Sussex coast contained in the defence report by Palmer and Covert in 1587 shows no part of The Owers; not even The Mixon is marked (Fig. 14). There is what appears to be a tower next to, but not joined to what is evidently the old parish church at Church Norton, presumably the detached one mentioned by Mark Taylor. Two *Donehouses* [sic] ('dovecotes'), near *Brackelsham* and *Selsey becons* are specifically indicated as being used as marks at sea.<sup>131</sup> This appears to cast doubt regarding Hume Wallace's hypothetical tower on The Mixon.

However, a statement by André Thevet could shed a different light on the matter, for he says that Henry II had a 'castle' built on *la Cité vieille*, in other words on The Owers, presumably on The Mixon. Thevet was admittedly a decidedly unreliable authority, not averse to including fictional matter of his own. He incorporated material from all sorts of unacknowledged sources, including part of Pierre Garcie's sailing directions, a passage from which was quoted above. His *Cosmographie universelle* (1575) provides plentiful examples of his carelessness. Thus, in describing the south coast of England, he writes: 'tirant au port de Rie, voyez le lieu de plaisance, & belle ville de *Vuincestre*, lieu de Sepulture des anciens Roys d'Angleterre' ('close to the port of Rye, behold the country seat and beautiful town of Winchester, where the ancient kings of England are buried'),<sup>132</sup> clearly confusing Winchelsea with Winchester.

An even more confused passage immediately preceding the above reads:

Le long de ceste coste y a vne Roche, qui est trois lieuës auant dans la mer, qui s'appelle *Cité-vieille*: & est lieu propre pour y dresser vn fort de grande consequence. Henri second du nom, Roi de la mesme Isle, y fit bastir vn Chasteau, le quel l'an mil cent quarâte & trois, fut de fonds en comble brulé & saccagé par l'armee de *Sueno*, Roy de Dänemarck, accõpaigné de *Sanctius*, Prince de Portugal.

('Along this coast there is a rock, which is three leagues offshore which is called Old City: and is an appropriate place to build a very important fortress. Henry II, King of the same Island [England] had a Castle built there, which in the year 1143, collapsed, burnt and sacked by the army of Sven, King of Denmark, accompanied by Sancho, Prince of Portugal.')



One might well be tempted to completely disregard such a hopelessly confused passage, on account of its chronology alone. Thevet was well acquainted with extensive coastal erosion.<sup>134</sup> What could possibly have motivated him to invent the detail about Henry II's 'castle'? It is far more likely that it is a jumble of inaccurate, misunderstood, poorly remembered facts. It is perhaps worthwhile examining briefly some relevant ones (see the chronological table below).

Swein I Forkbeard, King of Denmark, and father of King Canute, was king of England only from 1013 until his death in 1014. A passage in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that in 994 'Olaf [Tryggvason] and Swein . . . wrought the greatest harm which any raiding army could ever do, in burning, and raiding and slaughter of men, both along the coast in Essex, and in the land of Kent, and in Sussex and in Hampshire.'<sup>135</sup>

Henry II (1133–89) is known to have built a considerable number of castles, but there is apparently no known record of his having built one anywhere remotely near The Mixon.<sup>136</sup>

The first Portuguese prince named Sancho was the son of Afonso Henriques (1111–85), the first king of Portugal, who was first acknowledged as such in 1143. Relations between England and Portugal were excellent during the reigns of both Afonso Henriques and his son who, on his death, succeeded him as Sancho I. English crusaders assisted Afonso Henriques in 1140 or 1142 (possibly 1143) in an unsuccessful siege of Moorish-occupied Lisbon. They again assisted him in the successful siege of 1147.

A comparison of the above facts with the cited Thevet passage seems to suggest that somehow, utterly disregarding chronology, he managed to confuse three, possibly four elements: Swein's attack along the Sussex coast, in the company of his Norwegian ally, Olaf Tryggvason, not Sancho of Portugal; an account or rumour of Henry II having built or rebuilt, a 'castle' on The Mixon, perhaps from some as yet unidentified, presumably French source; an account of the participation of English crusaders in the two sieges of Lisbon in the 1140s; and Afonso Henriques being acknowledged king of Portugal in 1143.<sup>137</sup>

Henry II could have had a strong motive to build, or rebuild, some structure on The Mixon. The number of times he crossed the English Channel is not precisely known. However, of the 27 crossings documented by R. W. Eyton, 18 were between Normandy, usually Barfleur or Cherbourg, and Southampton or Portsmouth harbour, perhaps Portchester, almost certainly passing The Owers on each occasion. It was during a crossing at the beginning of March 1170, with 40 ships, that one was wrecked. The names of three people lost are known, but the site of the disaster is not.<sup>138</sup> The advisability of building, or rebuilding some structure on The Mixon for use as a seamark, even if not as an actual fortification, may well have occurred to him as a result of his experiences. If Thevet's statement concerning Henry II's 'castle' is true, further research may yet discover his source.

### §5. Other related names

Unfortunately, the surviving written sources recording the names of the individual parts of The Owers are all relatively recent. On the earliest chart that I am aware of, devoted exclusively to the Isle of Wight/Southampton/Portsmouth area, in anonymous Flemish sailing directions of 1572–80,<sup>139</sup> *Weembrug* figures as a vast shoal area ENE of the Isle of Wight, disappearing off the eastern edge of the chart; the cartographer appears to have had very little idea of what the Selsey area was like. None of the charts of Waghenae, Blaeu etc. has sufficient detail to add anything to our knowledge.

Disappointingly, in three more detailed ones of the area, those of Lambert (1594) (Fig. 9),<sup>140</sup> Collins (1693)<sup>141</sup> and Cutler (1727),<sup>142</sup> the eastern edge of each chart is just east of the entrance to Chichester Harbour, thus omitting the whole of The Owers and depriving us of the chance of discovering the names of their/its constituent parts. However, John Seller's chart of the Isle of Wight and The Owers contained in the 1716 edition of his *The English Pilot* does have a fairly detailed outline of the latter (Fig 15), identifying *Mixon or Malt Owers*, *Puller*, *Middle Ground*, *East Borrow head*, *The Owers or Lead*, and the site of a *Guinea Frigott Wreck*.<sup>143</sup>

The earliest surviving sailing directions to give some details of The Owers are those in Collins' *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot* (1693), and it is worth quoting them at some length. They locate The Owers:

south south east from *Chichester Spire*, and four Leagues from the shoar, and about four long Leagues or five Leagues east from *Benbridge Point* on the *Isle of Wight* [cf. the suggested origin of *Weembrug* in §3]; there [sic] length is north east and south west, about three leagues, and about three miles broad in the middle, and narrow at each end, and dry at Low-water. There lieth another shoal on the inside of this, the north end of it dries at Low-water: Between which and the shoar is another shoal lying in length as the *Owers* do, called the *Mixens*, and lyeth from *Selsey Point* about two miles south. There is a Channel between the *Owers* and the *Mixens*, but it being of no use but to those that are very well acquainted, I will not give any Directions to Sail through them, nor within them. There lye some other banks within them, which I forbear to speak of them [sic]. The only and chief end of my business is to give good Directions how to avoid these shoals, that have proved so fatal to so many Ships'.<sup>144</sup>

Collins nevertheless does mention by name *East-Barrow-Head(s)*, *Little-East-barrow-head* and 'a small parcel of Rocks, call'd *Kingman-Rocks* . . . four miles south by west from the going into *Arundel*' in a separate paragraph.<sup>145</sup> Cutler's sailing directions (1727) are somewhat similar, but, in addition, mention *Middle-Ground*, and 'the *Puller*'.<sup>146</sup>

The disappointing lack of any early examples of the names of the

constituent elements of The Owers and their vicinity is discouraging. However, in view of the fact that the area was once dry land, some speculation may perhaps be hazarded on the basis of those names that have come down to us. Inevitably, no definitive conclusions can be reached. Such names as Middle Ground, Middle Owers, Outer Owers, earlier known as *Sea Owers*, and Boulder Rock are presumably self-explanatory.

Lieut. Murdoch Mackenzie Jnr's charts of The Owers, and Chichester and Emsworth harbours, surveyed in 1786 and published in 1804 (Fig. 16), are the first to give several other names.<sup>147</sup> None of them appears to be in any way related to the now submerged *Rumbruge* and *Chenestone*. The second element of *Cymenesora*, as we have seen, could be derived from OE *ōra* 'shore', and thus have given rise to *ower(s)*. There is also just the possibility that *hora* is a scribal error for OE (h)ord 'spit, headland' especially in view of the phrase *plagam juxta mare* ('where the sea falls back') applied to the name in the Cædwalla document.

The Mixon, undoubtedly from OE *mixen* 'dunghill' is not listed in Mawer and Stenton. Hume Wallace, as quoted above, suggested very reasonably that the name was probably given on account of the stench of rotting kelp in the area. *midden* 'dunghill', which he mentions, though logical in sense, is not acceptable as the origin of the name, both for phonetical and geographical reasons, being of Scandinavian origin. However, the validity of the reason for the naming depends on how long evil-smelling kelp has been there and how long the name has been used. Unfortunately, the earliest record I have found, as mentioned above, is *Mixen* on Collins' chart of the Channel (1693); it appears as 'the *Mixens*' in the text.<sup>148</sup> It is presumably possible that dung (from bullocks?, see *Bullaker* below) was gathered and stored in that vicinity. If, as seems almost certain, The Mixon is the site of 'the old city' perhaps *Cymenesora* itself, it does not seem particularly likely that the location of its refuse tip would have been remembered, while that of 'the old city' itself was forgotten.

However, it was observed earlier that Mawer and Stenton suggested that Selsey Bill was probably adapted from Portland Bill, though I have seen no occurrence of the word *bill* in connection with Selsey before its appearance as *The Byll* on John Speed's map of the Isle of Wight (1610).<sup>149</sup> Their hypothesis could appear to be backed up by the existence of another instance of The Mixon at the tip of the headland called The Nothe near the entrance to Weymouth Harbour, very near Portland Bill.<sup>150</sup> It figures as a shoal as early as 1693 on an unnumbered Collins chart of *Portland* and *Waymouth* (sic) roads.<sup>151</sup> But it is recorded in documents as *Ye Towne Myxon* c.1540. In 1620 it was reported that 'the dung-heap called *le Towne Mixon* is situated in *le Channel* and thence is much carried away by storms of rain into the port'. So a few years thereafter other places were designated for the less insanitary disposal of dung and refuse.<sup>152</sup> The association of *bill* with a



nearby *mixon* on two occasions may be mere coincidence, but is suggestive. The *Mixon* association with Weymouth is well documented, but the only population centre of sufficient size to account for a human source for the Selsey *Mixon* is 'the old city'.

The name *Mixon* or *Mixen* exists, or has existed, in other coastal locations. It appears as *The Myxon* just north of *East Forland* (Bembridge Point) on John Speed's map of the Isle of Wight, where the nearby village of Bembridge could account for the name.<sup>153</sup> As *Mixon Shoal* it figures as the name of a sandy shoal which just dries, now 5 cables SSW of Mumbles Head in South Wales.<sup>154</sup> The proximity of Mumbles could explain that name. If *The Mixoms* [sic], a detached group of drying rocks by The Shoots at the entrance to the River Severn is another case of *mixon* it is not so easy to explain, for they lie some two miles across Bedwin Sands from the Welsh shore and Port Skewett, roughly where the new Severn Bridge is.<sup>155</sup> It may thus be that *mixen* (*mixon*), despite its original meaning, sometimes came to be adopted as yet another name for a shoal near the shore. Hume Wallace's suggestion is still a very reasonable possibility. However, in connection with the Selsey *Mixon*, see also under *Bullaker* and Kirk Arrow Spit below.

*Bullaker* is a name situated at the western end of *The Mixon* on Murdoch Mackenzie's charts (Fig. 16).<sup>156</sup> It could, of course, be the name of a ship wrecked there. On the other hand, depending on its age, it could be derived from OE \**bula*, ME *bole*, *bool(l)e*, *bul(l)e* 'bull', with OE *æcer*, ME *aker* 'arable land, field, acre'. The specific field name Bull Acre is recorded elsewhere,<sup>157</sup> and Mawer and Stenton cite some form of *æcer* or *aker* as an element in 28 Sussex field or minor names.<sup>158</sup> It may be mere coincidence, but in the Chichester Cathedral Register of 1258, Bishop Ralph II, on his Manor at Selsey is stated to have had livestock consisting of 20 bullocks, 10 cows, 1 bull, and 500 sheep.<sup>159</sup> Hume Wallace suggests that the vast number of sheep, and 70 deer mentioned 50 years later, implies that there must still have been a large area of saltmarsh or scrub-covered beach land then.<sup>160</sup> As can be seen on Murdoch Mackenzie's charts, even then (1786/1804), at 'very low Spring Tide' grass banks stretched along the coast east of *Selsea Bill* (sic), and as far as 'MIXON' (Fig. 16).

Any of the above suggestions would be logical origins for *Bullaker*. It is tempting to suggest that *Bullock Patch*, attached to a shoal some three miles west of *The Mixon* on the 1856 1st edition of Admiralty chart 2451 (Fig. 17), is similarly connected, but it appears certain that it was named after Fred Bullock, a mid-19th-century naval surveyor. It was not recorded by Murdoch Mackenzie, some 50 years earlier.

East Borough Head, sometimes *East=barrow=heads* (1693),<sup>161</sup> *East Burrow/Head* (1721),<sup>162</sup> *East Borrow Head* (1724),<sup>163</sup> and *East-Brough-head* (1671),<sup>164</sup> the name of a north-easterly part of The Owers, must derive from

OE **beorg** 'hill', whether natural or more probably man-made, thus giving *barrow* in the archaeological sense, as it appears in the long-submerged *Rumbruge* (*pri beorgas* 'three barrows') mentioned in the Cædwalla and other charters.<sup>165</sup> The metathesis of the *r* is paralleled by the case of *burg* and *brug* in some Dutch charts and sailing directions, thus *Weemburg* and *Weembrug* (see §3). Whether the East in each case implies the former existence of a *West Barrow* is doubtful. The existence of a *West Head* immediately west of it could well imply the existence of two heads either end of one barrow.

Kirk Arrow (Kirkarrow) Spit is the present, official name of the spit which extends from Selsey Bill towards The Mixon. While *Arrow* does not at first sight seem an entirely inappropriate name for such a feature, as it points out towards The Mixon, *Kirk* as a place-name element would seem to be decidedly unlikely on the south coast of England, being usually restricted to Scotland and northern England. For that reason alone, the suggestion of some locals that the name supports the submerged cathedral theory is therefore highly improbable. In view of the earlier recording of the name of the Spit as *Kekharra* on the Murdoch Mackenzie charts, it seems much more likely that Kirk Arrow Spit is a popular etymological version of that name with the addition of 'spit'.

In view of the number of *barrows* at one time in the area, the three *Rumbruge* ones and the almost certain East Borough Head one, it might seem that the second element could be OE **beorg** 'hill, barrow', but one would be hard put to it to explain the loss of the letter *b*, which appears to have survived in all the recorded names derived from **beorg**. Especially in view of the discovery by Hume Wallace and other divers of what they take to be large phallic stones in the vicinity of The Mixon,<sup>166</sup> it would not seem impossible that the *Arrow* element is the OE **hearg** 'sacred grove, heathen temple', found in Harrow (Mx), Peper Harrow (Sr), Harrowden (Bd) and Harrow Hill (Sx) etc.<sup>167</sup> Certainly in the case of Harrow, and possibly in the case of Peper Harrow, the first element was a personal name. The earliest recorded form of the first is *gumeninga hergae* 'the temple of Guma's people'. A countervailing argument, however, would seem to be that the majority of **hearg** names seem to be attached to hill sites.

Nevertheless, if one tentatively accepts the **hearg** 'heathen temple' suggestion, then it would seem likely that the *Kirk/kek(h)* element is a personal name. The nearby village of Cakeham might seem to provide one. The OE personal name *Cac(c)a* is suggested by Mawer and Stenton,<sup>168</sup> thus 'Cac(c)a's village, estate, manor', but, as Richard Coates has reminded me, in medieval spellings such a place-name one would expect some medial syllable to represent the ME genitive, as, for example, in Itchenor 'Icca's shore', Bognor 'Bucge's shore', Copnor 'Coppa's shore', or further afield Fakenham 'Facca's village', etc.<sup>169</sup> However, the suggestion 'Cacca's heathen

temple', for *kekharra*/Kirk Arrow is not necessarily invalidated on that account. The first recorded appearance of *kekharra* is very late. One can point to several cases where a medial syllable was recorded early, but subsequently disappeared. Thus, close at hand, what was early recorded as *Pacgan hamm* became Pagham '\*Pæcga's farm', and OE *Esanburna* 'Esa's stream' became Easebourne.<sup>170</sup>

The difficulty of trying to identify the meaning of names without early examples is well illustrated by the fact that Hume Wallace informs me that the local fishermen's name for Kirk Arrow Spit is *Kakhard*,<sup>171</sup> supposedly made up from what is claimed to be a local word for 'shingle', \**cacca*, and *hard* 'a firm beach or foreshore; sloping stone roadway or jetty at water's edge', as at Portsmouth Harbour. It is certainly not an inappropriate name, if the suggested constituent elements are correct. But it seems more likely that *Kakhard*, like Kirk Arrow, is yet another example of popular etymology at work. Murdoch Mackenzie's *Kekharra* (1786/1804) would appear to be the earliest, but nevertheless unique, relatively recent, and therefore not reliable ancestor of both. Is *Kekharra* a correct phonetic representation of the name locally at the end of the 18th century? Was the *h* in it pronounced or not? The Kirk Arrow form suggests that it was silent, and the *rr* would clearly indicate a following short *a*, as in *hat*. Where did the *d* of *Kakhard* come from? It is highly unlikely that a mere misprint of *d* for *a* would account for the popular pronunciation (*h*)*ard*.

There appears to be no written evidence for anything like \**cacca* being a dialect word for 'shingle', while there is plenty of evidence for *cac* (OE 'dung') which, given the immediate proximity of The Mixon (OE *mixon* 'dunghill'), seems the logical connection. As for the second element, (*h*)*ard*, it seems likely that it is OE *ord* 'spit, headland', which is so common in the area, and which, as a second element, often acquired a phonetically quite unnecessary initial *h*.<sup>172</sup> The suggested but unsubstantiated meaning of \**cacca* as 'shingle', though logical in view of the terrain, could well be a late, popular etymological explanation put forward to explain, in association with (*h*)*ard*, a name whose original meaning had been lost.

It has been suggested that *Cymenesor*(*d*?)(*a*?) may have been the earliest recorded name specifically of 'the old city' itself, rather than of some other part of The Owers, but was lost some time after its submergence and abandonment. If one discounts The Mixon ('dunghill') and presumably the basically synonymous *Kakharra* (*cac* + (*h*)*ord*, 'dung headland') as indicating the refuse tip of 'the old city', one would seem to be left with only three possible explanations, local farming activities in the area (see *Bullaker* above), or the transfer of the *mixon* form of the name from the Portland/Weymouth area, or Hume Wallace's suggestion.

Pullar, sometimes *Puller*, the name of one of the Owers, could be from OE *pull* 'pool, harbour?', as in Poole in Dorset, with *ōra* 'shore', and indicate



surviving land (an island?) on the edge of a deepish section of water, in this case one of the former islands, the Middle Owers, south of what is now called *The Looe*. *Puller* / *a hard Black Rock*, appearing on Jos. Avery's 'draught' of 1721,<sup>173</sup> figures also on Richard Budgen's map of Sussex (1724).<sup>174</sup> It is conceivable that the little island of *Powler* shown by John Speed at the entrance to Chichester Harbour on his map of the Isle of Wight,<sup>175</sup> and appearing as *Pullers* on Palmer and Covert's map of the Sussex coast (1587) (Fig. 14),<sup>176</sup> is similarly derived. However, at least in the latter case, **pole** + **ēg** 'island' seems more probable, in view of *West Pole* and *East Pole* either side of Chichester Harbour entrance on Murdoch Mackenzie's charts (Fig. 16), and *Middle Pole* and *East Pole*, both shown as islands in the same place on William Heather's chart of Spithead (1799) (Fig. 18).<sup>177</sup> The east one is shown as an island, though unnamed, on Richard Budgen's map mentioned above. It does not seem impossible that both the Chichester Harbour Puller and the one forming part of The Owers indicated an island or shoal marked by a pole. Richard Coates has tentatively suggested to me that the first element of the Chichester Harbour Puller could perhaps be *poll* 'head', in the sense of 'headland'. The apparently unique Palmer and Covert version, on the other hand, could conceivably indicate that that one had been owned by someone called Puller. The origins of both The Owers' Puller (*Pullar*) and the Chichester Harbour one remain uncertain.

Hounds, Houndgate Rocks appear in 1721 on Jos. Avery's chart, and on Mackenzie's charts of 1786 and 1804. They appear as *Houngate Rocks* on William Heather's chart of Spithead (1799) (Fig. 18). It would seem unlikely that the first element is from OE **hūne**, the name of some plant, as in 'horehound'. It could be from OE **hund** 'hound', though the name in that position is problematic. The name *Hundesgeat* is recorded in Gloucestershire.<sup>178</sup> On the other hand, two OE proper names suggest themselves: *Hund*, as in Hounslow, Houndstone, Houndstreet and perhaps Houndsditch;<sup>179</sup> and *Hūna*, perhaps more likely from a location point of view, since there is a Hunston (*Hūna* + OE **stān** 'Huna's stone') just south of Chichester.<sup>180</sup> The second element is most unlikely to be from ON **gata** 'road, street', or from ON **geit** 'goat', for both would seem to be restricted to the north of England. It is probably from OE **geat**, **gæt** 'gate', from its location near the site of a Saxon village, where Ham Marshes drain out into the sea, and marks one end of the strait that once separated Selsey from the mainland. It might seem logical here that it meant a coastal 'gap', whence 'Huna's Gap'.<sup>181</sup>

The Streets. The name suggests a continuation of the main street of modern Selsey. When the original site of Selsey village, now Church Norton, began to be abandoned, and a new village built on its present site, once referred to as *Soton* (i.e. South Town), the name *Street* (Fig. 16), or *Selsea Street* (Fig.

18) figured on some charts. The plural form is presumably due to the fact that there are several rocks. A derivation from OE *steort* 'headland' seems somewhat unlikely, partially because of the late appearance of *Street* (1786), and partially because of its relative insignificance so near to Selsey Bill.

Malt Owers appears as an alternative name for *Mixon* on John Seller's chart of 1716 (Fig. 15). On Jos. Avery's chart of 1721, it figures as *Malt Owers a hard / Black Rock*, and *Mixon* [sic] *hard / Black Rock* is separate from it. On Murdoch Mackenzie's charts *Malt Owers* is given as an alternative name for *Grounds* (Fig. 16). Could the now submerged land there once have been owned by a family called *Malthouse*, *Malthus*, *Maltus* or *Maltas*?<sup>182</sup> Or is the name that of a ship wrecked there? Either is possible, but there is a perhaps more probable origin for the name. A building named 'Malt House', with walls partially made of *Mixon* stone, exists to this day in Selsey, though much modernised. Its age is uncertain.<sup>183</sup> It could conceivably have served as a seamark at one time, and thus account for the name, though there is apparently no evidence to support it. It is possible that this particular Owers is a corruption of *malt-(h)ouse* under the influence of the other Owers further out to sea, in much the same way as the River Dart's *Oaze / dry* appears to have turned into *Flat Owers*.<sup>184</sup> The possible validity of this solution is, of course, dependent upon 'Malt House' having existed before 1716.

Medme(r)ry Bank is clearly named after what is now Medmerry Farm, probably because its barn was once a useful seamark; see *Medmeney Barn* on William Heather's chart (Fig. 18). The name seems to have been originally *medemenige* (OE *medeme* 'middle' + *ēg* 'island'),<sup>185</sup> apparently because the farm was on what had been an island in the middle of the channel or strait separating Selsey from Manhood (see Figs. 12 and 13).<sup>185</sup>

The Looe. Both Collins (1693) and Cutler (1728) mention a passage between The *Mixon* and The *Owers* to the south of it, but do not name it. It figures as *The Looe* on John Seller's chart of 1716 (Fig. 15). Some later charts, such as Jos. Avery's of 1721, add the word *Stream*. It could conceivably be from the same Celtic source meaning 'pool', as in the case of *Looe* in Cornwall. However, from Hume Wallace's researches it looks as though when sea level was lower, The *Looe*, protected by what are now Malt Owers, Brake or Cross Ledge, Boulder Bank, Pullar, Middle Bank etc. could well have provided some shelter from the westerlies for vessels heading for the 'old city', so Richard Coates' suggestion of *lew*, 'sheltered from the wind', clearly seems much more likely. To this day The *Park*, north-east of The *Looe* provides shelter from the south-west.

Shoal of the Lead, on the eastern edge of Outer Owers, is very steep-to, with depths of 50 m very close to it. Part of it dries. The earliest appearance of it

that I have found is on John Seller's chart of 1716 (Fig. 15). Is it so called because it is on the *leading* edge of the most offlying of The Owers, when approaching from the east? In view of the strong tidal streams in the vicinity, it would seem to provide rather short notice that the lead-line should be used there.

Hooe Bank, some way south of Outer Owers, appears as *Hooe Rock* on Mackenzie's charts. From OE *hōh* 'projecting ridge of land', cf. Plymouth Hoe, it would appear to mark the most southerly point of the submerged Sussex plain to still be identified by name.

It is astonishing that nearly four centuries were to pass before it was realised that The Mixon is actually a man-made structure, and is what is left of what William Camden correctly identified as the remains of a 'little ancient city'. It is almost as strange that the confirmatory documentary evidence of 14th-century charts and 15th-century sailing directions has remained unrecognised until now. In view of the extreme difficulty of diving in the area, is it too much to hope that, with adequate financial backing, technological developments may make it possible to discover more about it?

#### Chronology relevant to the Owers

BC	Evidence of Iron Age occupation of The Mound site at Church Norton
AD43–410	Roman occupation of Britain Evidence of it at Selsey (Church Norton)
c.70	Chichester ( <i>Regnum</i> ), probably Ptolemy's <i>Noviomagus</i> , romanised Romans quarry Mixon limestone from the older walled and ditched enclosure, but not the inner one
c.400	Sea level 4.5–6.5 m (15ft+) lower than today
c.408	Saxon shore ( <i>litus saxonicum</i> ) forts listed in the <i>Notitia dignitatum</i>
477	South Saxon invasion (Ælle, Cissa, Cymen and Wlencing)
491	Ælle and Cissa destroy Pevensey
681	Wilfrid's (Benedictine) See of Selsey Work at Church Norton on (wooden?) cathedral/church and monastery at Church Norton well established by 685 when Wilfrid was restored to his See of York
731	The Venerable Bede's <i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i> completed
787	First Danish raids
849–99	King Alfred of Wessex
c.993–1013	Sporadic raiding of English coast by Swein Forkbeard in company of the Norwegian, Olaf Trygvason
1013–14	Swein Forkbeard king of England



- 1014 The Great Sea Flood
- 1066 Norman invasion
- 1070 Stigand last bishop of Selsey and, after 1075, first of Chichester
- 1075 Council of London demanded all cathedrals be in towns, not villages
- 1086 Domesday Survey
- 1088 Chichester cathedral started
- 1143–85 Afonso Henriques king of Portugal
- 1140, 1142 (or possibly 1143?)  
First, unsuccessful attack on Lisbon by Afonso Henriques, with English help
- 1147 English crusaders assist in the successful siege and capture of Lisbon
- 1154–89 Henry II king of England
- 1185–1211 Sancho I king of Portugal
- 1189–99 Richard I king of England; Portsmouth granted its first charter 1194
- 1210 Chichester Cathedral's original two towers collapsed
- 1215 Magna Carta
- 1250–1425 Rapid rise in sea level; great land loss along the south and east coasts of England and in the Netherlands
- 1287 Old Winchelsea destroyed by the sea
- 1313 First appearance of *ciuita* on a surviving chart by Pietro Vesconte; seeming loss of its actual name implies its disappearance as an inhabited place a considerable time before
- 1328 Disastrous storm destroys 400 houses at Dunwich (Suffolk) and starts its decline; by 1573 three-quarters of it had disappeared
- c.1360 Gough map shows *manwod* and *selesey* as islands
- 1382 Bishop Reed's will requests that he be buried at Church Norton
- 1391–1402 Chichester cathedral's original spire built
- 1425–1725 Steady sea level, probably 1.2m lower than at present; former strait between Selsey and Manhood silts up; Selsey joined to Bracklesham
- 1546 Oronce Fine's map of France records *Les Ours*
- 1575 Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle*
- 1584–85 Waghenaeer's *Spiegel der Zeevaerdt*
- 1586 Thevet's *Le grand insulaire et pilotage* and Camden's *Britannia* ('little ancient city')
- 1587 Palmer and Covert's Sussex coast survey; no part of The Owers shown; tower shown at *selsey* (Church Norton); two dovecotes recorded as seamarks
- 1588 Armada's pilot book recommends steering well clear of *la Ciudad Vieja*

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